

REMARKS

Claim 30 is amended. Support is found for the amendment at pages 23-25 of the specification and figures 1 and 2. No new matter is added.

Claims 2-5, 21, 22, 28 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 5-2715 in view of Pike et al. (US 6,090,731) and EP 313,920. Applicants traverse the rejection to the extent that it can be maintained.

Claim 30 is the only independent claim presently under examination. Claims 2-5, 21, 22 and 28 depend directly or indirectly from claim 30.

Claim 30 as amended now recites that the strip of filament nonwoven is formed by a spun-laying method, and that the thermoplastic fiber forming the nonwoven is aligned with longitudinal edges of the strip to produce openings having a length oriented along a length of the strip and a width oriented between longitudinal edges of the strip wherein the length of the openings is substantially greater than the width of the openings. This feature is not taught or suggested by JP 5-2715 alone or in combination with Pike et al. and/or EP 313,920. Applicants request the rejection of claim 30 on this ground be withdrawn.

As claims 2-5, 21, 22 and 28 depend directly or indirectly from claim 30, Applicants request the rejection of these claims also be withdrawn.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.
P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, MN 55402-0903
(612) 332-5300

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By Curtis B. Hamre
Curtis B. Hamre
Reg. No. 29,165



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